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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8138
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1502
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4991
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8584
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6153
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1823
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4014
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHNNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1977
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000714

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, PA, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAO](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE INCREASED SCRUTINY OF EMBASSY RANGOON
PUBLIC AFFAIRS ACTIVITIES

REF: RANGOON 649

RANGOON 00000714 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: PAO Richard Mei for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The GOB publicly accused detained human rights activist U Myint Aye September 7 of accepting money from our former assistant public affairs officer (APAO), among others, for the purposes of committing "subversive acts." One accusation was a bombing against a government-affiliated group. Furthermore, we recently noted two instances of increased military intelligence (MI) scrutiny of PAS activities outside of Rangoon, although though we do not yet detect a consistent pattern. End summary.

DETAINED HUMAN RIGHTS LEADER U MYINT AYE ACCUSED OF
'TERRORISM'

¶2. (SBU) On September 7, government-run Myanmar TV (MRTV) broadcast a press conference in which Myanmar Police Chief Khin Yi described the various activities of recently arrested human rights activist U Myint Aye, among others. The entire transcript of the press conference was printed in the September 8 edition of the government's New Light of Myanmar.

U Myint Aye, a frequent Political and Public Affairs section contact, is the leader of the Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP) network. He was arrested on August 8, 2008 at his home (reftel) on the order of Home Affairs Minister, General Maung Oo. At that time, U Myint Aye was active in supporting cyclone relief in the Irrawaddy Delta. When he was arrested, the authorities confiscated receipts for donations to cyclone victims and a list of donors.

¶3. (U) During the press conference, the Police Chief charged that U Myint Aye "committed terrorist acts in the name of human rights," linking him and others to illegal opposition groups outside of Burma and to several bombings inside the country, including a July bombing of the government-affiliated USDA office in Shwe Pyi Thar, Rangoon

Division. Also mentioned was U Myint Aye,s confession that "he accepted K5 million (USD 5,000) from Mrs. Kim (sic) of the US Centre (sic)."

¶4. (C) We have verified that our former APAO passed U Myint Aye the equivalent of USD 5000 in Burmese currency at his home for cyclone-relief activities. The money was not USG funds; donations had been collected by the Foundation for the People of Burma (aka Burma Foundation), a private humanitarian organization and the expenditures on Nargis relief activities were verified. (Note: We have obligated USD 15,446 through our small grants program for HRDP activities in various states, but the money was never distributed, due to U Myint Aye,s August arrest. End Note.)

INCREASED SCRUTINY UP-COUNTRY

¶5. (C) Two other, separate incidents involved an Amcit employee of the American Center and a locally employed staff (LES) at the Jefferson Center in Mandalay. From September 2-4, the Amcit employee took a trip to Myitkyina in Burma's north to recruit participants for a professional development program targeting ethnic youth to be held at the American Center. He reported being followed by military intelligence throughout his trip, beginning with his departure from Rangoon. (Note: A P/E officer made a similar recruiting trip to Taunggyi August 21-23 without incident. End Note.) In mid-August, prior to the visit to Mandalay of our new DATT, a LES of the Jefferson Center reported being questioned at his home by military intelligence about the DATT,s visit (of which he was unaware) and the activities of the Jefferson Center, which include reference library services and English language classes.

RANGOON 00000714 002.2 OF 002

COMMENT

¶6. (C) The GOB's public targeting of U Myint Aye for alleged terrorist acts and the linking of him to receipt of money from a U.S. Embassy employee, despite the fact that the funds were a private humanitarian donation, are of serious concern. The up-country incidents may be coincidental. We will be watching to see if a pattern of increased scrutiny of embassy PD activities and contacts develops over the next few weeks.

DINGER